



4 Things You Need to do to Receive Jesus Christ Into Your Life

1. ADMIT your spiritual need. "I am a sinner."
2. REPENT and be willing to turn from your sin.
3. BELIEVE that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.
4. RECEIVE through prayer, Jesus into your heart and life.

PRAY
SOMETHING LIKE THIS FROM
THE SINCERITY OF YOUR HEART

Dear Lord Jesus,
I know that I am a sinner.
I believe that you died for my sins.
Right now, I turn from my sins and open the door
to my heart and my life. I receive your forgiveness
and ask you to be my personal Lord and Savior.
Thank you for saving me.
Amen

Iderlina Acosta

I was blind and now I see.

I thought I did see, but the reality was I was blind to the truth, the way and the life. I knew of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. I followed the rules, rituals and went with the motion of the religious beliefs I was raised on growing up. When you are young, you don't really think of life after death. I was more focused on the belief that "good things happen to good people". So I lived life according to that belief.

I was blessed with a good career and a loving husband. I was blessed with a beautiful healthy son. Life was good! Life was good because I was good (so I thought). A year and a half after I had my son, my husband was diagnosed with cancer and was given 3 months to live. Surprisingly, I was not mad nor had I lost faith in God. My belief was Joe would go to heaven because he was good enough in my mind. But, WHO actually decides whether a person is good enough to go to heaven? I started asking and seeking for answers. Slowly but surely, I started to see the truth and the way. I am a work in progress but my faith and trust is now on Jesus and Jesus alone.

I now see God's sovereignty, His power, His goodness and faithfulness. I trust He works in the ordinary circumstances of my daily life for my good and His glory."

I now see the love of Jesus for me.

Jesus, the Son of God who loves me so much that He died for my sins, taking the punishment that I deserve, was resurrected from the dead, is alive and hears my prayer. I put my faith in Him and believe that receiving Him alone as my Savior, declaring "Jesus is Lord", I am saved and will spend eternity with God in heaven - present heaven and new heaven.

I now see the Holy Spirit as my Comforter. He helps, leads and guides me especially at my weakest and reminds me to lift up my eyes to the Lord for it is from Him that help comes.

I am so blessed that I can now see. I will keep looking UP for He is good, full of mercy and grace.

*"Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."
Hebrews 4:16*

Jenny Ahn

I was baptized as an infant and grew up in a Christian home. I accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior at a Christian summer camp when I was around 9 years old. Accepting Christ has been my first vivid memory of my first steps on my walk with Christ.

My walk hasn't been easy and there have been times when I've gone on detours, reverse, or simply crawling. But through these setbacks and adversity, I have been able to persevere and become more refined as well as have my faith strengthened. Although I am still a work in progress, I find comfort and joy to know that I have Christ as my champion.

Additionally, I am extremely blessed and grateful for my parents who have given me the best gift of all - the opportunity to learn and know Christ for my life's entirety. I am also blessed and grateful for my exemplary older sister who was baptized earlier this year. She was and continues to be an inspiration in my life and was instrumental in my decision to be baptized again.

Ultimately, the reason I am choosing to be baptized again is to create another vivid memory of this huge step in my continued walk with Christ. I would also like to be baptized like Christ did by complete water immersion.

This walk wasn't meant to be easy, but it's worth every second of struggle or tribulation for the joy of having a relationship with the Great I Am.

"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the Glory of God."

Romans 5:1-2

Mason Chae

Hi, to everyone who doesn't know me, my name is Mason Chae. Currently I'm attending Cal Poly Pomona as a Freshman. First and foremost, I was not brought up in a Christian home. I have actually been a Christian for around three years now and these three years have truly been nothing but memorable. Throughout my life, before I met Christ, it was different. I was this kid who didn't care for much and would try to experience life to its fullest, which I thought to be partying or just messing around with a bunch of my friends. Throughout my first two years of high school, I began to get into the party scene which really began to take a toll on my life. I drank every weekend and began to get into the vaping culture which I thought would be truly living life to the fullest. The beginning of my freshman year and towards the middle of my sophomore year was honestly a ride. It was filled with many different types of new experiences that I truly began to love but to be honest never really satisfied me. The things I was chasing were for the now, but I would truly question the future and how my life would turn out in the end. I always knew that there was a higher power but I never really knew what it would be like to believe in a higher power and truly give your life to someone you can't even touch.

Towards the end of my sophomore year, a bunch of my friends began to tell me to come out to church. The only reason I came out in the beginning was for the friends and being able to have a strong group of good friends. As I continued to go out to church I really saw the changes in my life. I began to stop going out on Saturday nights because I kept going out to church for Saturday service which felt more like a blessing in disguise. After a while, I was invited to the Legacy retreat, which I personally believed would be a time away from my phone and focusing on my friendships - but really nothing with God. God showed me something different though. Being able to hear the different types of worship songs, and different messages we had, made me understand how God loves me so much and what He truly meant to me. This allowed me to feel that love from Him and that was something that I wanted. When I finally decided to want Christ for myself, I felt that there was something so much more satisfying than just drinking or partying. I was able to finally live for something. Something that I knew was going to satisfy my life eternally.

My attitude towards God when I first began to believe was that if I believe in Him, then He would truly do things miraculously for me. But this did not happen. There is this retreat called Mt. Hermon which was a week long and really showed a lot of what God can do in so little time to a bunch of kids. My first year at Mt. Hermon was actually the last year of Senior

High there, but here is when I truly saw the beauty of God. As I matured in my faith, I saw the many blessings God has given me. God blessed me with so many like-minded friends that I honestly wouldn't trade for anything. Instead of God doing something I wanted, He gave me true friends that I was able to have deep conversations with and also something true to live for. My attitude towards God as I continued to grow in my relationship with Him was to want to want Him. To really be able to want Him and to give my whole life to Him and live for His will. Also, I was able to change in a multitude of ways which has allowed me to become the person I am today. I am so grateful for the opportunities God has given me. Even with any highs and lows throughout my life, I want to put all my trust in God. I can see the difference from my past life and my NEW life with Christ and I can't wait for the new opportunities God has to offer.

Cameron Choe

Hi, I'm Cameron.
I would like to share my story.

When I was born until I was four, I didn't know Jesus.
When mommy and daddy took me to church, I started learning about Jesus
and learning about the Bible.

Jesus knows everybody.
I just talk to Jesus when I pray.
He helps me do everything I need to do now.
I know that He died on the cross and He rose again from the grave.
He went on the cross to forgive us and to save us.
He changes the old self to new.
He changes your life.
Jesus is stronger than anything.
He is always in your heart, if you are a Christian.
You will go to heaven if you accept Christ.

After seeing my Baptism, I hope my friends that don't know Jesus will
accept Christ too.

*“Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them,
for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”
Matthew 19:14*

Robin Choe

My life before Christ was quite tumultuous. As a son of an immigrant Korean family just shortly arriving into the US in the mid-70's, there was a tremendous amount of pressure on my parents on not only to survive but also being able to provide and raise children to be successful and good citizens. Growing up, I was raised in an environment where there was stressed parents who were always working, high expectations to figure out how to be successful in their eyes, and to summarize, a lot of dysfunction and confusion. I grew up somewhat confused about my identity, purpose in life, and had a skewed perspective on God as a Father driven by a lack of relationship with my earthly parents. I always believed in God through the lens of my praying mother and limited childhood church memories, but during my junior high and high school teen years, I began exploring identity and purpose through careless living and destructive habits. It was in college when I hit rock bottom and was at a point where I was depressed and at my wits end. I was desperate at this point and felt God was calling me to seek Him, to test and see if He was truly good and a Father that I never had. I was invited to a church retreat in August 8, 1997 and felt the Lord calling me to attend. At this retreat, I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior and felt for the first time forgiveness of my sins, a new life and purpose, ultimately the true reason for being.

Since my conversion over 20+ years ago, I have been a work in progress by God's grace and growing, being able to serve the Lord in various capacities, go on missions, work and live overseas, make mistakes and course correct along the way, but overall, experience God working miracles through the everyday circumstances and seasons of life. I would say the Word of God and the Church especially in the context of life groups have been life giving for me. God has also been a God of redemption for me and my family. I met my wife Angela at life groups many years ago, and our marriage is a testimony of God's redemption. Even the miracle of having Cameron and Cara, our son and daughter born into this world and given to us as a gift is a sign of God's love and faithfulness.

Now that we are back in the states after being in Asia for five years, I want to be officially baptized and do it in partnership with my son Cameron. This is a moment of rebirth and declaration that God is our perfect Heavenly Father that blesses us with the gift of salvation through multi-generations. I want my generation, my children's generations and the generations to follow to experience the salvation, truth, and life through Christ and the gospel. Finally, I am so thankful that God has provided a church which is an answer to our prayers, SBCC, to be a community we call home!

Cherish Corpuz

My relationship with Jesus has been filled with many highs and lows. I was raised in the Catholic Church; baptized as an infant, attended Sunday School, and completed the other sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist, and Confirmation. I never questioned that God created the universe and that Jesus died for our sins. I had my first personal encounter with Jesus at my high school retreat; we were simulating Jesus' ministry of washing people's feet and I witnessed what it looked like to be a servant leader. I was on a spiritual high and served on many retreats throughout the remainder of high school. Once I moved from Hawaii to California for college, however, everything changed. I did not have the boundaries that used to keep me focused on family and church. I met so many fascinating people and was introduced to many different perspectives on life. I began to question if Catholicism was the only path to heaven or if any religion was worth following at all. I immediately got entrenched in the business community and started stacking my resume with multiple jobs and internships. I believed the lies that I was pursuing something of value: a stable career and wealth. I fell into the trap of working hard and partying harder. I filled my free time with countless bar hopping and Vegas trips that were fun in the moment, but ultimately left me feeling empty.

During these times of emptiness, I started searching for an anchor to draw me back to a solid foundation. I did not want to return to my Catholic faith because I did not agree with some of the teachings. I decided to seek God through my own means and read through the Bible in one year. I thought that would renew my attraction and desire for God. Instead, I was left with more questions and felt angry at the depictions of God's wrath and ruthlessness. During that year, I was also attending a church that had a "doomsday" preaching style that left me feeling hopeless. Many aspects of my life were unraveling: my full-time job was not filling me with a sense of purpose; my friendships were shallow and focused on lavish displays of wealth; and my relationship with my Christ-following boyfriend was on the rocks due to a mismatch of beliefs and values.

I realized that it was time for a change. I searched for a new church and ended up at South Bay Community Church. I got plugged into an all-women life group that immediately made me feel welcome and never made me feel guilty for my past. The most important thing I learned from this group of girls is how to pray. These strangers prayed over me the first night, which was an amazing experience. Growing up in the Catholic Church, I always prayed pre-scripted prayers. Hearing their raw intercessions and worship to God breathed life into me. I realized the importance of vulnerability and being

surrounded by a community that can encourage and keep me accountable on my walk. God continued to pursue me through different avenues. A pivotal moment of my walk was hearing a sermon by Pastor Greg: Psalm 22 – The Gospel According to David. He quoted Matthew 24:14 “And this gospel will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.” This stood out to me so much because it addressed my “doomsday” concerns from the previous church I was attending. I realized then that God’s covenant applies to all peoples and that He will go to the ends of the earth to gather His lost sheep before coming back to judge. I was so filled with hope after that message and decided to make SBCC my home church. Throughout the next two years, I still faced temptations to fall back into my previous life, but overall my relationship with Jesus was deepening.

I can honestly say that I wake up every day, excited to read the Bible and spend some quiet time with God. My faith in Jesus is the anchor I was searching for. Although I made a lot of mistakes in my life, I have an overwhelming sense of forgiveness and grace because God has blessed me with so much. I am no longer living for the world’s standards, but for a kingdom purpose. After taking the Perspectives Class, which focuses on The Great Commission, I wanted to dedicate the remainder of my life with Revelation 7:9-12 in mind. My husband and I are following our Spirit-led call to Okinawa to partner with God to reach the 99% of Japanese people that do not know Him. After everything God has purposefully placed in my life, I think I am uniquely equipped to reach broken, regret-filled people who may be hesitant to put their faith in Jesus because they do not want to abandon a religion that was so culturally ingrained by their family. I’m excited to see what God has in store for us next!

“I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,”
Ephesians 3:16-18

Madilynn Dandan

Before Christianity, my family and I were Catholic. My parents baptized me as a baby and my brother and I were altar servers for the church we went to. We attended church every Sunday, and my brother and I also went to a Catholic school. We never read the Bible, and most of it was based on tradition. At Sunday mass my mom was constantly telling me to be quiet or to sit still. It was really because I didn't understand what the teaching was and I was getting bored. But here at South Bay Community Church it's really different. The first time we came here, I listened to the message and I was honestly really shocked. I understood it, and I even asked my mom if we could come back. All of us knew we had found the right church. A long time ago when I was about 3 years old I was diagnosed with Leukemia, which is a type of childhood cancer. I realize now that God wouldn't have saved my life here on Earth if He didn't have a bigger plan for me, and whatever it is I know it is good. Looking to Christ really changed my heart. It makes me feel happy when I'm able to serve Him. When I'm going through something tough, I know that I can pray to God, and He will answer if that is His will.

*“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.
I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish;
no one can snatch them out of my hand.”
John 10:27-28*

Bryce Elder

I grew up attending religious school, and attending church services regularly, but what was missing was my personal connection to Christ. In my early 20's — I felt a strong presence around me, guiding me towards faith, community, and God's overwhelming love and forgiveness. Over the past 5 years, my connection with Jesus has strengthened, deepened, and helped me in every way to be the person standing here today, ready to start my life anew, cleansed, and living fully with the Spirit.

*“You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”
Galatians 3:26-27*

Issac Franco

As a kid I always knew about God. My mom and dad raised me to be a Christian and go to church on Sundays. I remember being in church only thinking about what we were going to get for brunch and not really paying attention to what the pastor had to say. I grew up in Christian schools and would always memorize Bible verses and I never actually thought too much about Jesus other than pray every night for my family to be safe and what not. I knew God was real and I knew He was ruler over everything but the thing I was lacking was a relationship with Jesus. I would not think about Him unless I wanted something or was in need.

When I turned 13, I just turned old enough to go my church's retreat and that was when I started to understand what it meant to have a relationship with Jesus but eventually fell back into sin when high school came around. I fell into the high school crowd and started living more for people than for God. Many nights going to sleep without prayer and filling my heart with things that didn't praise God was my life up until I started to feel empty and hopeless. I felt a void in my heart that I knew was Jesus that I was missing from my life. Around senior year I started to attend church again regularly and over the past two years repented for my sins and gave my life back to Christ.

Giving my life back to Jesus hasn't been easy but it's the best decision I could've ever made. Ever since I gave my life back to Christ I've noticed the blessings in my life that I received through Jesus. I changed my major in school and have even been more encouraged about getting a degree. Jesus showed me all the amazing people that serve Him throughout my life and has always been there when I needed Him.

*“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you.”
Deuteronomy 31:6*

Jenna Ho

I've been going to church ever since I could remember. In 2012 my life changed when my family attended an Easter service here at SBCC. We have been coming ever since that day and we absolutely love it here.

In KidzKrew I accepted Christ as my Lord and Savior but my life didn't change after that. It took 4 years for me to truly have a personal relationship with God. In 6th grade I went on a winter retreat. That was the first time I felt a personal relationship with God. At the retreat He spoke to me in many ways that I will never forget. I have a better understanding of how God wants us to live our lives as His followers. By no means am I perfect, but knowing God will always be there for me makes it easier.

*"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-not by works, so that no one can boast."
Ephesians 2:8-9*

Ashley Kamiyama

I grew up in a Christian family, and have always attended church. I was not converted, nor did I have to face a life changing tragedy to discover God - luckily. Although, I admit that when I was younger, I did not really understand the concept of having a relationship with God. I believed that being a follower of Christ meant praying before meals, reading the Bible, and attending church.

In middle school, things started changing. I went on my first retreat, which was Winter Vision. For the first time, I felt like I really felt the presence of God. The worship was really touching and, not to be cheesy, but you could say that it was life-changing. Also, I learned about quiet time and devotional time and truly felt like I understood what it meant to be a Christian. Especially after hearing all the messages and spending quality time in small groups as well. Through my middle school years, I became really close to God and that was when my faith was the strongest.

However, high school came along and things changed. My focus shifted from God to other things like grades, dance, etcetera. Freshman year was supposed to be the easiest, most enjoyable year of high school. So why was I struggling and so miserable? Every day, weekends included, I did homework, projects, or studied. It was a conscious vicious cycle of going to school, dancing, studying, and sleep deprivation. Subconsciously, I knew I was unhappy because I had drifted away from God. But I ignored the fact and tried to figure everything out myself. Thus, I think God allowed me to experience many interesting things these past 2 years. I gained a lot of insight on school, life in general, and relationships (not romantic ones- just in general). Slowly but surely, I realized that God was nudging me, reminding me to "Trust the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight," Proverbs 3:5-6.

Jason Kleczkowski

Before I accepted Christ:

I was born into the Catholic community when I was younger and brought into the Baptist Church around 7 or 8 years of age. I did not take church and Christ seriously, in fact I was baptized when I was around 9 years old because I wanted to go out to eat for my “celebration”. Before coming to Christ, I was in the Military and did not value my spiritual life as much as my materialistic life. I wanted the best of everything, I wanted the respect of everyone, I did not care how I spoke to people or acted around people. I lived in the life of lust and greed.

Circumstances surrounding my decision to accept Christ truly into my Life:

I was in a relationship for 5 years that was very toxic. I had a child with a woman who wanted to leave me and take my child with her. She had no idea what taking my child away would do to me. I was in a very dark place and I did not know whether to end my own life, move out of state and leave my child, or stay and go mentally insane with everything piling up involving bills, financial issues, relationship issues, court to fight for my daughter, school, and being around complete strangers with no family near me. I felt God tugging at my heart while I was in the relationship with my child’s mother and it felt that she was not trying to support my walk with Christ.

How my life has completely changed:

After praying about making my decision about my physical being, I looked more into church and SBCC in particular. I went to the college group and then a bible study group. After really making my faith known to those around me and being very open about relationship with God, I started seeing a mental and physical difference in my daily activity. I started watching things that I say, eating healthy and praying before making any major decisions. Involving God in my life and learning more about his word has made me a more understanding person to the evil that goes on in my life and instead of cursing someone I pray that they are able to see God and have their life be lifted up to God. Even though my daughter is continuously held as a bargaining chip, I continuously pray and open up my heart to God to let Him work his blessings and power through me.

“For I know the plans I have for you’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

Jeremiah 29:11

Chris Koon

From birth, my mom raised me as Christian child. She taught me many Christian values and I would always go to Sunday school, learning about Jesus and the Bible stories. I loved saying that I was Christian and I said that Jesus was my Savior, but I didn't really know what that meant until later on in life.

I came to the realization of Christ once I started high school. High school freshman year was a tough year for me. I went to a high school that I didn't necessarily enjoy. I felt out of place and not myself. These were times when I was truly searching for God. I was praying more than ever just looking for some answers on what I should be doing and why this is happening to me. I eventually left the school and moved to Rolling Hills Prep. This was the turning point in my life. I was finally at a place where I could better myself as a Christian and person all around. I started to see God work in front of my eyes. He was introducing me to people that I would now consider lifelong friends. He was showing me that certain things in my life happen for a reason. It's all in His timing though. My faith grew and I was so sure about God and His presence. He is working through me and is always there. This is why I am so excited to be able to publicly declare my life to Jesus, knowing that He has died for me. I am more than ready to commit to being a lifelong Christian and eventually live the rest of my life in heaven with my Lord and Savior.

*"I love the Lord, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy.
Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live."
Psalm 116:1-2*

Taylor Kos

My life is like a film: full of scenes, characters, settings, and story arcs. Each day reveals more about the main character, me, Taylor Kos, takes me closer to or farther from my goals, and brings plot twists and challenges. But this story isn't about me. It's about Jesus and how He shows Himself through my life. There's no real defining moment of revelation in my relationship with God, but a gradual pull into His heart.

My first memory of God is in early elementary school watching a reenactment of the story of Jonah during a Vacation Bible School. My family lived on the east coast and moved to the South Bay when I was ten years old. My parents have always taken my younger brother and me to church most Sundays. Until about thirteen years old, I rarely gave it a second thought. I knew the basics about God's existence and about Jesus, but it had no impact on my life. At a small church Sunday school and VBS, I learned about God and the Bible. God was more like the light side of the force in Star Wars, a distant, benevolent being controlling the galaxy. I volunteered every so often at church and absorbed my Sunday school lessons, but God had not yet set off my plot. I was too busy with life. Still, He was knocking. After a church message one day, during prayer, I found thirteen year old me seeking God to tell Him "Lord, thank you for sending your Son Jesus to die on the cross for my sins so I can go to heaven. I want to serve you with my life." I knew that meant my wrongs were forgiven, Jesus came into my heart, and I will go to paradise with God when I die, but I didn't feel any significant change that I expected. I lived in fear of unknowns and had no steady sense of identity. Still, God kept writing in my heart. At about fifteen years old, my interest in the Bible and studying science books about evidence for His existence grew, and I tried to talk to God more often and about more. In 2015, my family moved to Texas for my father's job. To flashback a bit, in grades sixth through tenth, I took English class for Christian homeschoolers with an amazing teacher whom God used to teach me what it means to live as a Christian. The first book we studied each year was a book of the Bible. For the first time, I took an interest in what God's Word says. While studying the Psalms, for the first time I recall, I heard the quiet voice inside I have come to know. "Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast." (Psalms 139:8-10) That stood out to me as if it were colorful calligraphy. No matter where I go, God is always there. This eased my fear of moving away. Plot

twist! My family didn't move to Texas after all.

During the fall of 2016, two significant events began. In a youth theater production, I met my first true best friend, who quickly became my boyfriend. God used his family to invite mine to South Bay Community Church in the summer of 2017. Here, God continues to bring worship, learning from the Bible, and fellowship to life, opening my mind and heart. I also began participating in a Christian homeschool speech and debate league from fall 2016 to spring 2018. While it gave me opportunities to speak about the gospel and other Biblical truths, it caused extreme anxiety, panic attacks, shredded my self-image from the rigid judging, and fear of "not being good enough." I questioned if I believed what I spoke about God. It didn't feel right, like I was fake. I began to doubt my salvation, and if I truly "believed in Jesus enough." Because I continued to be ruled by anxiety and anger issues, it made me think I wasn't changing to be more like Jesus like I knew I should be. To counter this fear, I invested myself in my boyfriend. Through him, God revealed so many lessons, such as unconditional love, and that I am loved for who I am, even if I make mistakes. I believed this in my head, yet I struggled to believe it in my heart.

A significant turning point in understanding my faith was my first Legacy high school retreat in March 2018. The theme was living with an "Undivided" heart for God. There, I timidly yet sincerely asked God to give me the heart to follow Him only and mold me into who He wants me to be. At two other retreats, God taught me more and grew my relationship with Him. To make a long and challenging past year short, God does indeed answer prayer. He really does want to mold me. But not in the way I expected at all. My relationship with my boyfriend grew deeper and became more important to my satisfaction and identity than God. I was frequently paralyzed by overwhelming anxiety and depression.

Then, this summer, the Lord flipped my life upside down by writing my boyfriend out of my story. Without him, who I came to depend on, I was left with nothing, utterly broken in a deep depression, doubting God, and questioning everything. I share this not to seek pity, but to demonstrate the depth of valley God reaches down into to turn what the enemy wants to destroy me and instead use it for good. After two months of darkness, Jesus Christ began shining His light in my heart. I gave up fighting to change the past and worry about the future. For the first time, I meant it when I told God, "All that I am is Yours. My heart belongs to Jesus Christ alone. Whatever happens, You are my life." Suddenly, I felt as though I was vividly alive. He continues to show me the meaning of a song I listened to when I was little, but I didn't understand it. Now, these words hold power. "Not because of who I am, but because of what you've done, not because of what I've

done, but because of who you are.” (*Who Am I*, by Casting Crowns) God is revealing all the truths I know in my head are vivid in life. Before, I felt meaningless, alone, and doomed to fail. Now, I have a purpose, I have the most powerful being ever to guide me, and although I am imperfect, my mistakes are forgiven by His love. God continues to write my story, one that will bring Him glory and share His love with others. Today, baptism symbolizes dying to my old self and rising up as a new person with a new goal in life. In the words of Galatians 2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

”But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.”
Jeremiah 17:7-8

Julie Lee

As a kid growing up, I always believed in God, even though we didn't attend church. My mom was Christian, my dad grew up Catholic but converted to Buddhism later in life. Between my brother and two sisters, my sister Pam was the most religious, and she would attend church with friends from time to time growing up and more often later on when she got married. While I would attend Bible study sometimes with friends in high school, I never made a personal connection with God.

When I was a teenager, my father, who I was very close with, passed away suddenly. Since I was young, I didn't understand why God would let this happen and spent my 20s and 30s mostly living without faith. In 2007, my sister Pam was diagnosed with leukemia while 8 months pregnant with her first child, a child her and her husband had tried for many years to bring to life. She quickly delivered a healthy son, then began aggressive treatment on her cancer. I prayed to God to help her survive so her son would have his mom. She also had many friends and family praying for her and her family, so I thought if anyone was going to survive, it would be her. When she died that year, I didn't understand why God would take away such a good person and why He would leave her 9 month old son without his mom. While my mom, in her faith, believed it was God's will to have Pam in Heaven, I was angry and continued to struggle with my beliefs.

It was not until I met and married my husband Paul that I have found faith in God. My husband had been through many struggles in his life and his faith kept him strong throughout. While we were starting our family relatively later in life, we have been blessed to have two wonderful, healthy children, Marissa and Seth. Paul looked for a long time for the right church for our family and found SBCC, which has made our lives so much more fulfilling and I have finally accepted Jesus into my heart. In recent years, we have had personal and professional stresses to endure, but I feel comfort knowing my family and I will be guided by our faith. I look forward to continuing to grow as a Christian.

*"Come to me all of you who are weary and carry
heavy burdens, and I will give you rest."
Matthew 11:28*

Kristen Schiefer

My mother was excommunicated from the Catholic Church for having me out of wedlock. Because of that experience, she formed some very strong negative opinions about the church and organized religion in general. As a result, I was never given any spiritual guidance aside from the beliefs she held, but she did tell me that she wanted me to make this very personal decision for myself.

From a very young age I have been seeking and I remember asking neighbors if I could go to church with them, which they gladly obliged, but not having a foundation in the home to build on didn't make my quest very sustainable. As I got older, I attended various churches with my friends, usually as a condition for a sleepover or some other bargaining chip, but never "belonged" anywhere and really did not get the value. I explored various religions as an adult and even practiced Buddhism for a few years, but my attempts to have a relationship with God were short-lived. I had come to describe myself as agnostic, because nobody could convince me that He existed, I wasn't able to prove that He didn't and my philosophy was, whatever it takes for you to be a good person, do THAT.

I have a very close friend that is very active at SBCC. Her name is Kirstin Wilson and she is a true peacemaker. Every time I was in a bad situation, she would gently ask if she could pray for me. I always agreed because desperate times call for all measures and some of my times were quite desperate. She stayed by my side encouraging me delicately and never trying to impose her beliefs on me.

Then earlier this year I had a pivotal life moment that caused me to closely evaluate my circumstances and take action. Remembering my friend's gentle encouragement, I asked to join her at church one weekend and then began attending regularly on my own. This time church felt different. The messages were resonating and as the weeks went on, I began to feel differently. It was something I had never experienced before and for the first time in my life, I didn't feel alone. I decided then that I wanted to commit my life to Jesus Christ and finally be baptized. From that moment on, I knew my life would never be the same. I began participating in Lifegroups and making prayer and devotional time part of my daily routine, without exception. My relationship with God grows stronger every day and as I make this proclamation before you today, I know this is exactly where I am meant to be. After all, my name is Kristen Renee, which literally means "Follower of Christ, reborn."

Austin Settle

My parents and grandparents are Christians, and at VBS we were talking about asking Jesus into our hearts. I prayed with my leaders because I wanted to be a Christian. I prayed and asked Jesus to come into my heart and forgive me and wash away my sins.

I want to learn more about Jesus now that I have asked him into my heart. I pray that the Lord will help me in any problems that I have.

I know I am forgiven and have eternal life because Jesus said whoever believes in Him will be forgiven and have eternal life with Him in heaven.

“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.”

Revelation 3:20

Caleb Settle

I have grown up in a Christian home. Reading the Bible and listening to my chapel teacher in second grade made me want to accept Jesus into my heart. I prayed with my mom and dad for Jesus to forgive and guide me.

Knowing Jesus has made me want to go to church more. I want to be more Christ like so I can show others what a Christian is. I know I am forgiven and have eternal life because I have faith that the Lord always keeps his promises.

*“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and
certain of what we do not see.”*

Hebrews 11:1

Kiana Sinn

I have known God growing up ever since I could remember, I attended KidzKrew daily on Sundays, prayed to God before bed and would read the many stories about Him. As a young child, I loved and believed in Him with all my heart. I was always happy and felt safe knowing that He is always beside me. Even when I got scared, I prayed to God and knew that everything was going to be alright. But as many years passed, my faith in Him began to fade. Facing the many challenges that school and the outside world brought along caused me to feel more alone and insecure at many times. As an only child, I didn't have any brothers or sisters to talk or play with so I had to hope that the friends I met were true enough to replace what was missing.

After graduating from a little fifth grader in KidzKrew, I attended Evolution as an incoming sixth-grader and went regularly till the end of my seventh-grade year. Since most of my friends were a grade above me, when they left Evolution to go to Legacy I stopped attending Evolution in my eighth-grade year. I later started attending Legacy through the push of my mom who told me that it would be good for me and help me get closer to God. The thought of returning after being gone for almost two years made me feel scared because I feared I would be alone again. That was not the case, on my first day back at Legacy everyone was so kind and welcoming, they made me feel like I belonged in a family. I began to sing louder during worship and started praying more frequently again. I felt the warm presence of God with me.

I recently attended this year's summer retreat. Being away from all distractions and my phone allowed me to strengthen my faith in God and fully accept Him into my life. He opened my eyes and the world is so much brighter, it truly is God's creation. I learned we are royalty, his chosen people and God's possession. I realized He has blessed me with so much to be thankful for, from the many amazing friends I have met through church, to the everlasting faith I have in Him.

*"Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you.
I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up
my hands. I will be satisfied with the richest of foods; with
singing lips my mouth will praise you."*

Psalm 63:3-5

Cadence Smith

I have been a Christ follower all my life.

I love God and I want the world to know that I am a Christian

As a CHRISTIAN I pray every night read the Bible in the morning, go to church most Sundays. God has helped me in so many ways. When I was in my mother's stomach and the doctors did not believe that I was going to make it but God saved me and I am standing here preparing to get baptized. God is good all the time.

*"How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that
we should be called children of God!"*

1 John 3:1

Nate Smith

My whole life, I have known Christ. I have always, since birth, known who Christ Jesus was and I believed He died for our sins. My testimony is about my relationship with God getting tested over, and over and over again. Ever since I can remember, I would always go to church on Sundays and I would pray to God every night with my parents and more. The only issue that I had with that was, my relationship with God wasn't a personal relationship. It was my parents' relationship. I started to look back on my life and I started to see how I wouldn't read the Bible unless instructed to by my mom or teachers. I wouldn't go to church or even have conversations with people at church, unless I was actually there. I saw finally that it needed to change and I needed to make my relationship with God a more personal one. Since I made that decision, I have tried and continuously kept working at it. The road was not easy but I can definitely say that I talk to God everyday, whether it is with my parents or when I am alone. I have started volunteering in church, and I can finally say that I am much closer to God now than I was all those years ago.

“But Christ is faithful as a son over God’s house. And we are the house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast.”
Hebrews 3:6

Brandon Yee

Growing up I was fortunate enough to experience so many things and to be put in favorable situations that allowed me to live comfortably. This was due to my parent's encouragement and guidance. In general, I thought things always worked out for me one way or another. As a result, I never really worried about things and thought I was just a lucky person; or so I thought.

In the middle of July, one summer night I was in a situation that caused me to hit my head on the ground that fractured the back of my skull and caused bleeding in my brain. I was about a block away from my house and a few people I knew brought me into my house and left me, assuming that I was okay. The next morning my parents noticed I was acting very strange and this continued until the following day. They decided to call my best friend who was in the medical field and he told them to take me to the ER. I was admitted into the hospital and was bed ridden for over a week. The doctors told my parents they might have to do surgery on my brain if the swelling doesn't go down. They assumed that long term I would most likely not be able to finish my last year of college, because I would have trouble retaining the information. The doctors said I was lucky to be in the state I was in due to the amount of time not going to the hospital. I could have died during those 2 days of untreated bleeding and swelling in my brain. I do not remember anything that happened that night or anything after for about 2 months.

I took a medical leave of absence from school and did about 6 months of rehab to test my motor and brain functions. In order to be let back into school I had to complete a 2-hour evaluation with doctors to see if I could handle the mental task of college. A week later I got cleared to go back to school; thank God. I remember sitting alone one night thinking about the whole situation. What hurt me the most is the pain I caused my parents. I just kept thinking about how fortunate I was to be in the state I was in compared to the previous five months. The more I sat there the more I kept thinking, "Why am I alive, when I should be dead. What did this all mean and why am I here?" I felt as if there was no purpose in my life, yet someone was watching over me. I just kept looking up while thinking about this, and I said to myself there must be a God.

Fast forward a few years and I met Lauren, my now wife. She grew up going to church, but God had never been a priority; however, her parents were strong believers. Lauren would ask me if I ever thought about becoming a Christian and I answered I wasn't sure, but it was a possibility. It was also important to me that if I became a Christian it was because I

absolutely believed in my heart that Jesus is Lord and not because I am trying to please her. We would occasionally attend service and I enjoyed the messages; but something was missing. I wanted to know more about God, so I asked her father, Craig, what books of the Bible He recommended reading. He told me to start with the gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. I remember reading about Jesus and was energized by the words He spoke and the way He lived. Yet, I was still on the fence about being a Christian.

One night I was driving to the gym and two cars were blocking the intersection at the very last minute while I was crossing. I was certain I was going to get into an accident because I could not stop my car in time. I heard my tires screech and I felt as if my car got pushed sideways while simultaneously going forward. I didn't hit either car and was in a state of confusion and awe. As soon as I got to the gym, I texted Lauren and explained that I almost got into a car accident but felt as if someone pushed my car from hitting the other vehicle. The whole situation did not seem real. It was on my mind all week because it felt supernatural. That Sunday, Lauren and I decided to go to church with her parents and they had a guest speaker. He spoke about how he got into a big car accident when he was younger. He was unharmed but shaken up by the whole incident. As he was sitting on the side of the road, a lady approached him and sat right next to him. They exchanged a couple of words, but she left saying how God was watching over him. He said he would never forget that moment. That night is when he decided to commit his life to God. At that moment, I felt as if God was speaking to me directly. All these events that happened wasn't by luck or chance. Everything that happened in my life was for a purpose. Something inside of me was awakened. I started to attend church regularly and started listening to sermons on podcast. With Lauren's encouragement and Craig's guidance I found myself drawing closer to God. I was ready to commit my life to God and accept Christ as Lord and Savior.

From that day forward, it felt like I had a bigger purpose in life. It's not about living for my selfish desires, but about living for God. As a result, my actions and mindset have changed completely. Material things that I used to value so much seem like more of a waste. The bad habits that were a major part of my life have been pruned. None of this change could have happened without God in my life. I can truly see how God has been working in my life even before I came to faith. Everything happens for God's purpose and I trust in Him. Life has been so much more fulfilling and meaningful. I am far from perfect and stumble daily; but having Christ as a model servant gives me hope. I have faith in Christ Jesus and by His grace I am saved.

Lauren Yee

My dad had a strict rule of NO DATING until I was 17, so that time finally came around in high school and I was immediately in a relationship. While in school, I was fairly shy and an introvert, so I finally felt as though I could open up, be my weird self, and be completely comfortable with a boyfriend. As with any close relationship, time brings out your true character. I had unrealistic expectations of how he should act and how he should treat me, which revealed how controlling, stubborn, and prideful I was. My “love” for my high school and college relationships was the complete opposite of God’s selfless love, but was instead a self-centered love based on emotion. “What can you do for me?” “How do you make me feel?” Each time I felt they weren’t fulfilling their role, I would point out what they were doing wrong, all the while ignoring that I was a large source of the problem. I expected to receive a love, purpose, and fulfillment from my relationships that could not be satisfied from any person in this world, but rather a being outside of it.

I got out of a 6 year relationship a couple years after college and thought it was best to take time to be on my own (I’m sure God put that on my heart as I was almost constantly in a relationship since I turned 17).

(Side note: I grew up attending church and was raised in a Christian home, but I didn’t have a relationship with God. He was not a priority or a presence in my life.)

Little did I know that the time of my singleness would be where my Lord and Savior would be revealing His pure and perfect love and care for me. It was as though He was preparing my heart and mind for a relationship with Him. To see how in every situation in my entire life He has been protecting me, teaching me, correcting me, loving me. Protecting me from my poor judgement/decisions, teaching me to discern right from wrong, correcting me when I did wrong, and loving me by never leaving my side through it all. Although I did not realize it at that time, the period of singleness is where my Heavenly Father used not only the situations and circumstances, but also the people in my life to reveal His ultimate sovereignty as He perfectly provided and cared for me as a significant other would hope to do. I had to stop looking for a relationship to be the source of my completeness and purpose, but rather look above to the one and only God of the universe. I was trying to fill a spiritual relationship with an earthly relationship and would not recognize it then, but rather a few years down the line.

A few years down the line came and I met Brandon, my now husband. He was not a believer and had never attended church. God was still not a presence in either of our lives, but that was all about to change as it was

the beginning not only of a new relationship with one another, but with our Father in heaven.

You don't want to know how many times we almost broke up, because I thought we were completely opposite and had little in common, but Brandon never gave up. I think it was initially difficult for me, because he did not often express his love through words, but rather his actions by selflessly serving me in big and small ways (1 John 3:18). It was as if God was showing and teaching me what His true love is all about. Not fleeting emotions, but selfless, action-based love that is steadfast and enduring through all the ups and downs of life.

The third year of our relationship (about 2 years ago) brought a lot of change. I got interested and slightly obsessed with health and well-being. I went vegan for 6 months and began meditating, which develops mindfulness (being in tune with your body and surroundings). Ultimately I feel like God was detoxing my body from all the junk not only from toxins, but from worldliness. The healthy eating allowed me to have mental clarity and the meditating allowed me to be more mindful of not only myself, but what was going on around me. Around this time my dad was encouraging my brother, Brandon, and me to listen to sermons by Pastor John MacArthur. At first it was difficult as I tried to listen to just one sermon a week, sometimes skipping here and there as it was more of an obligation than a fulfillment. The timing and sovereignty of the Lord is truly remarkable as He began to reveal how He was working within my life and things were no longer unnoticed or attributed to chance or coincidence. It was all God. It was always God. It all happened like a flash of light, because before I knew it, that one sermon that was difficult to listen to became every day and sometimes 2-3 times a day. I was spiritually starving and finally being fed God's living and active word. I am still in awe of how God brought me, my brother, and husband to faith all around the same time. My dad had a huge role as he became our teacher/mentor and we began a discipleship that has helped us build a strong foundation on God's word. God provided my family not only by blood, but through Christ to grow alongside, exhorting and uplifting one another to develop our relationship with Him. I can barely put into words how grateful I am. My Father allowed me to understand that true love, purpose, and fulfillment does not come from looking from side to side in this temporary world, but by looking above, to Him in eternity. As I observe our society/culture today, I see a focus on serving yourself with an attempt to fulfill your life with material things, relationships/sex, drugs, or whatever else this world has to offer. Unfortunately, there is no end to this pursuit as it continually falls short. There is only one who does not fall short. The moment I gave my life to God, was the exact moment I found

it (Matthew 16:25). He graced me with faith in my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. A faith that gave me a new life, washed of my sins, through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

God began to completely transform my heart and mind as I began to follow Him. He continued to teach and show me what true love is. The love of Jesus and not of the world. The love that is patient, kind, and endures all things, rather than being arrogant, irritable, and insisting on its own way (1 Corinthians 13:4-7). The love that now resided inherently in me because of the love and sacrifice of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit. God opened my eyes to see that I could not search and find any human being in this world to fill the role that He solely could. He has and continues to use every single aspect of my life to point to Him.

This road has been filled with an indescribable amount of joy and victories, but that does not mean it hasn't been without its struggles and downfalls. God allowed me to face my sin, weaknesses, and faults that were so much a part of who I was. My old self and the world screams, "Do what's best for you" or "Just be with someone who makes you happy", but God gently teaches me to say, "How can I serve you" or "Your needs are greater than my own." If this transformation were all up to me, I would fail and quit in an instant, but my Father is All-Mighty, so I lean on Him for strength. He is a personal God who desires an intimate relationship, so I go to Him in prayer, knowing that He hears me and listens to what I am struggling with. He is provider and has graced me with the Holy Spirit and all the spiritual blessings I need to persevere, endure, and come out victorious. Ultimately, my God is a Father of pure love. I have been deemed His child and even though I fall so short, He has called me from death to eternal life with Him. I am ready and excited for a life with Jesus and pray that I may follow Him with a steadfast and enduring love through all the ups and downs of this life, so that one day I may be perfect and complete, lacking is nothing (James 1:2-4).

*"It is God who arms me with strength and makes my way perfect.
He makes my feet like the feet of a deer;
he enables me to stand on the heights."
Psalm 18:32-33*

Cheryl Yoshida

The path to me getting baptized has taken over half a century. My father was a Sunday school teacher and provided my Christian foundation.

While I believed in God, I really didn't let Him in my heart. I held a lot of anger, hatred in my heart I'm sure God would have not been happy with. I had this belief that once you profess your faith, God will test you with trials and tribulations.

My life is already filled with enough trials and tribulations. I wanted to be a closet Christian. I didn't want to do or say something and have people think, "Oh that's really Christian." I wanted my life to reflect my beliefs.

After attending SBCC for the last few years, I have grown and matured in my faith. I invited God into my heart. I have asked for His forgiveness and asked Him to guide me in life. I still have plenty of trials and tribulations, but I have a peace and faith that is guiding me.

God has changed my heart.

*"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight."
Proverbs 3:5-6*